

# Commissioner Phelps Announces Selection to Lead Re-Entry Programs, Reduce Recidivism

*Jim Elder, new Bureau Chief of Community Corrections, oversees re-entry programs at the Wilmington HOPE Commission*

**DOVER, Del.** – Department of Correction Commissioner Perry Phelps on Thursday announced the selection of Jim Elder – the Director of Clinical Services for Re-entry Programming at the Wilmington HOPE Commission – to lead DOC's efforts to help offenders successfully re-enter their communities, and reduce Delaware's rate of recidivism.

As DOC's Bureau Chief of Community Correction, Elder also will oversee mental health and substance abuse treatment programs for individuals under community supervision and in Level 4 correctional facilities.

"We have a responsibility to rehabilitate and treat the offenders who enter our custody," said **Commissioner Phelps**. "I trust Jim's experience and education will improve our current programs while also reducing recidivism in the long term. I look forward to working with him to return the men and women in our custody to the community better prepared to find success."

The selection of Elder will place a new emphasis inside the agency on re-entry programming and efforts to reduce recidivism. The Bureau of Community Corrections oversees probation and parole, pretrial services, the community work release program and other supervision programs.

"We all have a stake in making sure that offenders successfully re-enter society, and have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute," said **Governor Carney**. "It's also

imperative that we do everything we can to reduce our recidivism rate – to make sure that fewer Delawareans who spend time in our correctional system go on to re-offend. That’s a critical part of keeping our prisons safe, and reducing our prison population.”

Selection of a Bureau Chief of Community Correction with experience in re-entry programming was a crucial element of [Governor Carney’s plan](#) to reform the Department of Correction, following the Independent Review into the causes of the February 1 incident at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center.

Governor Carney on Wednesday announced the appointment of a [Special Assistant](#) at the Department of Correction who will focus on reform of management practices and training, and cultural turnaround – and report publicly on the state’s progress in implementing the Independent Review’s recommendations.

Last week, Governor Carney and the Correctional Officers Association of Delaware announced an [agreement](#) to raise salaries for Delaware’s correctional officers – including a [22 percent increase](#) to starting officer pay. The agreement, which includes establishment of a Labor-Management committee to study additional staffing issues, will help the state recruit and retain officers across Delaware’s correctional system.

*Governor Carney’s DOC plan also includes:*

- Investing \$2 million in new cameras and authorizing 50 additional correctional officer positions at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center;
- Investing \$1.3 million in new equipment and training for correctional officers;
- Directing the Delaware State Police and the Department of Correction to jointly conduct an after-action review of the February 1 incident;
- And directing the to-be-created Department of Human

Resources to implement a comprehensive staffing plan that eliminates the shortage of correctional officers.

Elder has an extensive clinical background in substance abuse treatment and mental health programming. He is currently the Director of Clinical Services for Re-entry Programming at the Wilmington HOPE Commission.

Elder is a Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health (LPCMH), a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDP), a board Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) in the state of Delaware and a National Certified Counselor (NCC) under authority of the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). He has worked in the correctional treatment field for 20 years in Delaware, across the country and abroad.

He earned a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Maryland College Park and a Master's Degree in Community Counseling from Wilmington College.

Elder will begin work July 3.

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